

Chapter 1: Introduction

[605a] Thus have I heard. One time the Buddha was staying at the city of Kuśinagara, the birthplace of great scholars, on the shore of the Ajiravatī River between a pair of sāla trees. At that time, the World Honored One was accompanied by a great congregation of monks (bhikūus) numbering eight hundred million one hundred thousand people who encircled him front and back. It was the fifteenth day of the second month that the time of his entry into Nirvāṇa was imminent. Using the Buddha's spiritual power, he issued a great voice that filled the minds of beings everywhere. Conforming to each species, this voice addressed all the sentient beings, saying, "Today the Tathāgata, the Worthy (Arhat), the Completely Enlightened One, feels compassion for sentient beings, protectively shelters sentient beings, and equally regards sentient beings as he would Rāhula. For the sake of those who have taken refuge and those who are worldly householders, the greatly awakened World Honored One now wishes to enter Nirvāṇa. If any sentient being has uncertainties, they can now submit the very last questions."

At that time, in the early morning, the World Honored One emitted from his facial orifices a variety of lights that were brilliant and consisted of a variety of colors. They were blue, yellow, red, white, crystal (sphaṇṇika), and agate. These lights illuminated the trichiliocosm of the Buddha world entirely, extending out into all ten directions as well. The sentient beings of the six destinies within those worlds who encountered these lights had all of their misdeeds, defilements, and afflictions (kleśas) nullified. The minds of the sentient beings who witnessed these events, were greatly distressed and at the same time uplifted by that empathic voice, which was called the "sympathetic cry". Its lament was that of a sympathetic parent, who cries, "O, the suffering! The distress!" They lifted their hands to their heads, beat their chests, and cried out loudly. Those beings who had bodily form were terrified. They wept and sobbed.

At that time, the Earth, mountains, and oceans shook. Then the sentient beings said to each other, "We now resolve to discipline ourselves so that none are subject to great anxiety or distress. Let us go now with haste to Kuśinagara, the birthplace of great scholars. And when we arrive we will salute the Tathāgata, pay our respects, and beseech him to forgo entry into parinirvāṇa and to remain in the world for another aeon (kalpa) or less than an aeon."

They held each other's hands and again said, "The world is empty and the merits of the sentient beings are exhausted. Unwholesome deeds have been developed and produced in the world. Now the Sage shall soon leave us! He shall soon leave us! It is not long now before the Tathāgata must enter Nirvāṇa."

And again they said, "The world is empty! The world is empty! From this day forward we will be without aid [605b] or protection. Having no tradition to which to look, we will be left impoverished and isolated from the nectar. In one morning, we shall be left behind by the unsurpassed World Honored One. Who shall we go to with our questions should we have doubts or confusions?"

And then there was a measureless number of great disciples present. The venerable Mahākātyāyana, the venerable Vakula, and the venerable Upananda were among those of the great monks who encountered the Buddha's light and, being unable to maintain themselves, were tossed about when the ground shook. Their minds were muddled, perplexed, and anguished, and they cried out. There thus arose in them such a variety of afflictions.

And at that time, there were eight million monks who were Worthies. They had attained mastery of their minds. Having done what needed to be done, they were free of the afflictions and had pacified their faculties. They were like great nāga kings possessing a great majestic virtue.

Having consummated the wisdom of emptiness and seized their own reward, they were like a sandalwood forest with sandalwood trees all around, or like the lions who surround a lion king. Having consummated such measureless virtues, they were all true disciples of the Buddha.

In the early morning at sunrise, when each of them arose from their quarters and went to clean their teeth, they encountered the Buddha's light and said to one another, "Sage, you must brush your teeth and bath with haste!" This being said, they arose, body and then hands. When they stood, the side of their bodies upon which they had lain was red like the *palāṅga* flower. Tears filled their eyes, and there arose in them a great anguish. Hoping that sentient beings might receive the blessing of peaceful happiness, they had consummated the Mahāyāna's supreme practice of emptiness. They had set forth the expedients of the Tathāgata's esoteric teachings in order to prevent the disappearance of the various spoken Dharmas and bring about the circumstances leading to the pacification of sentient beings. They made haste to the Buddha, prostrated themselves at his feet, and circled him one hundred thousand times. With their palms together in reverence, they withdrew to sit at one side.

And at that time, the women of Kuśinagara were present. The nun (*bhikṣuṣā*) Good Worthy, the nun Upananda, and the nun Oceanic Mind were accompanied by six hundred million nuns who were all also great Worthies. Their outflows were ended. They had attained mastery of their minds, having done what needed to be done. They were free of the afflictions and had pacified their faculties. They were like great *nāgas* possessing a great majestic virtue. They had consummated the wisdom of emptiness.

In the early morning at sunrise, they also arose, body and then hands. When they stood, the side of their bodies upon which they had lain was red like the *palāṅga* flower. Tears filled their eyes, and there arose in them a great anguish. They, too, hoping that sentient beings might receive the blessing of peaceful happiness, had consummated the Mahāyāna's supreme practice of emptiness. They had set forth the expedients of the Tathāgata's esoteric teachings in order to prevent the disappearance of the various spoken Dharmas and bring about the circumstances leading to the pacification of sentient beings. They made haste to the Buddha, prostrated themselves at his feet, and circled him one hundred thousand times. With their palms together in reverence, they withdrew to sit at one side.

And among the nuns, there were further nuns who were like *nāgas* among the bodhisattvas [605c]. They were seated and peacefully dwelt at the level of imperturbability among the ten bodhisattva stages. It was in order to transform sentient beings that they manifested female bodies and constantly practiced the four immeasurable minds. Having attained the power of self-mastery, they could have transformed themselves into Buddhas.

At that time, there were bodhisattva-mahāsattvas present whose number was equal to that of the sands of one Ganges river. They were *nāgas* among men who were seated and peacefully dwelt at the level of imperturbability among the ten bodhisattva stages. They could expediently manifest their bodies. The names of the foremost leaders among the bodhisattva-mahāsattvas were Bodhisattva Oceanic Virtue and Bodhisattva Inexhaustible Mind. Their thoughts were reverent of the Mahāyāna, peacefully dwelt in the Mahāyāna, deeply understood the Mahāyāna, delighted in the Mahāyāna, and protected the Mahāyāna. They could skillfully conform themselves to all worldly beings and make the vow, "I shall lead those who have not yet been liberated to the attainment of liberation." They had in the distant past of countless aeons cultivated and purely kept the precepts, skillfully maintained the practice of understanding what is not yet understood, and assisted the three jewels to be certain that they did not perish. And in future lives they would turn the Dharma wheel and adorn themselves with the great armor. Consummating such measureless virtues as these, they regarded sentient beings equally, as they would an only child.

In the early morning at sunrise, they also encountered the Buddha's light and arose, body and then hands. When they stood, the side of their bodies upon which they had lain was red like the *palāṅga* flower. Tears filled their eyes, and there arose in them a great anguish. They, too, hoping that sentient beings might receive the blessing of peaceful happiness, had consummated the Mahāyāna's supreme practice of emptiness. They had set forth the expedients of the Tathāgata's esoteric teachings in order to prevent the disappearance of the various spoken Dharmas and bring about the circumstances leading to the pacification of sentient beings. They made haste to the

Buddha, prostrated themselves at his feet, and circled him one hundred thousand times. With their palms together in reverence, they withdrew to sit at one side.

And at that time, there were laymen (upāsakas) present whose number was the equal of that of the sands of two Ganges rivers. They had taken and kept the precepts and perfected their majestic deportment. The foremost leaders were the laymen King Majestic Virtue of Undefined Speech and the layman Good Virtue. They deeply delighted in the contemplation of the ways of correcting oneself. The subjects of their contemplation were distress and happiness, permanence and impermanence, purity and impurity, self and non-self, the real and the unreal, refuge and having no refuge, sentient beings and what are not sentient beings, the continuous and what is not continuous, peace and what is not peace, the conditioned and the unconditioned, the ending and the unending, Nirvāṇa and what is not Nirvāṇa, as well as advancement and what is not advancement. They always delighted in the contemplation of the ways of correcting themselves. They, too, longed and delighted to listen to the unsurpassed Mahāyāna. And having heard it, they could explain it to others. They were skilled in purely keeping the precepts. They quenched their thirst for the Mahāyāna and when they were completely satisfied, they could, again, drink up what remained. They were skillfully able to accumulate the unsurpassed wisdom. They delighted in the Mahāyāna and defended the Mahāyāna. They were skillfully able to conform themselves to [606a] all worldly beings, liberating those who were not yet liberated and understanding what was not yet understood. They assisted the three jewels to be certain that they did not perish. And in future lives they would turn the Dharma wheel and adorn themselves with the great armor. Their minds were constantly steeped in the flavor of the pure practice of the precepts. They were able to consummate such virtues as these, and there arose in them the great thought of compassion when they regarded sentient beings. They saw them with equanimity and without duality, as they would an only child.

In the early morning at sunrise, because they wished to be present for the cremation the Tathāgata's body, they each took up ten thousand bundles of fragrant woods. These included sandalwood, aguru, ox's head sandalwood, and the fragrant wood of the heavens. The lines on the grain of each of these woods were quite compact. They had embedded into them the seven treasures, which glowed with a marvelous light. It was as though they were painted decoratively with various colors. Because the Buddha's power, there were wondrous hues of blue, yellow, red, and white that sentient beings were delighted to see. These woods had been treated with a variety of perfumes, including saffron, aguru, and ambar. They were sprinkled with flowers that were blue lotuses (utpala), white lotuses (kumuda), red lotuses (padma), and silver lotuses (puṣkara). These fragrant woods were covered with pennants of all five colors. These pennants were soft, pliant, and marvelous, like heavenly cloth, silk cloth (kaushika), linen (kūma), or silk embroidery.

They carried these fragrant woods with jewel-inlaid carts. These jewel-inlaid carts produced a variety of lights that were blue, yellow, red, and white. Their axles and spokes were filled with a mixture of the seven treasures. Each of the carts was yoked with a team of four horses, and each of the horses was as swift as the wind. Each of the carts had standing at its fore fifty-seven marvelous and precious pennants and was covered by a netting woven from real gold. Each of the jewel-inlaid carts again had fifty wondrous and precious canopies. Above each of the carts there were draped flowering vines on which there grew blue lotuses, white lotuses, red lotuses, and silver lotuses. There were flowers that were made of pure gold, had leaves of diamond, and were set on terraces. In those flower terraces there were numerous bees that buzzed in them happily and enjoyed themselves. Also, there were wondrous voices that spoke of impermanence, distress, emptiness, and selflessness. And among these voices some again spoke of the root of practicing the bodhisattva path. There were, as well, a variety of singers and musicians who played bamboo lutes, harps, flutes, and drums. To this delightful music was a voice singing, "O, the distress! The distress that is in this empty world!"

Before each of these carts there were four jewel-inlaid stands carried by laymen. And upon these stands were piled a variety of flowers. These included blue lotuses, white lotuses, red lotuses, and silver lotuses. There were also saffron fragrances and other perfuming fragrances that were wondrous and supreme. The laymen furnished a variety of meals and supplies for the Buddha and the saṅgha. These included fragrant firewood made of sandalwood and aguru. The food was

sweet and exquisitely cooked in the eight virtuous waters, [606b] and had six flavors. These flavors were bitter, sour, sweet, acrid, salty, and insipid. The food also had three virtues. These virtues were light and soft, pure and clean, and like the Dharma. Assembling such a variety of adornments, they went to the birthplace of great scholars, where the Buddha rested between a pair of sāla trees.

Once there, they spread gold dust all over the area. They covered the dust with kalaviōka clothing, kambala clothing, and embroidered silk clothing, creating a pile all around twelve yojanas high. They prepared for the Buddha and the saṅgha lion thrones inlaid with the seven treasures. These thrones were as tall as Mount Sumeru. And above the thrones were precious curtains from which were hung jewel necklaces. From the sāla trees were hung a variety of marvelous pennants and canopies. The trees were treated with a variety of excellent perfumes. Flowers of various names were scattered among the trees.

The laymen each then had this thought, "If any sentient beings are lacking in their possessions of drink, food, clothing, medicine, head, eyes, limbs, or body; then they can make use of these offerings we have furnished." When they gave this gift, the laymen were free of desire, enmity, anger, defilement, discord, or otherwise injurious thoughts. Being devoid of any remainder of these thoughts, they made the vow to seek the life of merit and happiness. Their only ambition was the unsurpassed and pure bodhi. These laymen peacefully dwelt in the bodhisattva path.

And then they had this thought, "The Tathāgata has today received our food and shall enter into Nirvāṇa." Having had that thought, they arose, body and then hands. When they stood the side of their bodies upon which they had lain was red like the palāḥa flower. Tears filled their eyes, and there arose in them a great anguish. Each of them took up and carried the gift of supplies that were piled into their jewel-inlaid carts. These gifts included fragrant woods, pennants, flags, precious canopies, beverages, and food. They went to the Buddha with haste and prostrated themselves at his feet. They made offerings with what they had carried with them with the wish to support the Tathāgata. They then circled him one hundred thousand times, lifted their voices that were called "tearful grief", and their voices were such that they shook both Heaven and Earth. They beat their chests and let out a great cry. Tears fell from Heaven like rain. And they said to one another, "O, Sage, distressing is this empty world! How empty is this world!"

Thereupon, they lifted their bodies and hurled themselves before the Tathāgata. They said to the Buddha, "Our only wish is for the Tathāgata to mercifully accept our very last offerings." The World Honored One remained silent when he saw this and did not accept the offerings. And after three such attempts, he still did not take them. The laymen's wish having no effect, their minds were sorrowful and anguished as they silently waited. It was like the extreme grief and anguish of a loving father who was forced to send back home for a funeral the body of his only son, who had suddenly taken ill and died. The compassionate tears and anguish of these laymen was also so. With their gifts and supplies, they calmly arranged a place and withdrew to sit quietly at one side.

And at that time, there were laywomen (upāsikās) present whose number was equal to that of the sands of three Ganges rivers. They had taken and kept the five precepts and perfected their majestic [606c] deportment. The names of the foremost leaders among the myriad number of laywomen were the laywoman Life of Virtue, the laywoman Virtuous Hairpin, and the laywoman Vaiśākha. They had the capacity to protect and uphold the true Dharma. In order to liberate the measureless hundreds of thousands of sentient beings, they manifested female bodies and enforce the household Dharma.

They regarded their own bodies to be like the four venomous snakes, like bodies that are always food for an infinite number of insects, and like bodies that were foul smelling, defiled, lustful, and a prison of bondages. They considered their bodies to be [like] a detestable corpse. They regarded their bodies to be always leaking from the nine impure orifices and like a fortress constructed with blood, flesh, sinew, and bone wrapped in skin. The hands and feet being used for repelling enemies, they were like the tower and shield. The eye was the window. The head was the ceremonial hall. And the heart was the king's quarters. The Buddhas, the World Honored Ones, discard this bodily fortress. In contrast, the ordinary confused person is always partaking of attachments. Covetousness, lust, anger, hate, and delusions establish the demons (ṛākūasa) that inhabit him.

They regarded the body to be infirm like rushes, reeds, the airāvāoa tree, water bubbles, and plantain trees. They regarded the body to be impermanent and that thoughts abided nowhere in it; that it was just like a lightning flash, rushing water, or the shadows cast by a fire; or that it was like a line drawn in water that is swallowed up just as it is drawn. They regarded the body to be variable and destructible, like a great tree growing on a river shore or near a sheer cliff. They regarded the body to not be long-lasting, that it shall be food for foxes, wolves, kites, owls, buzzards, eagles, ravens, crows, and starving dogs. Who that is wise would delight in this body? How can an ox's footprint hold an ocean's water? It is impossible to say that it can. They regarded the body to be impermanent, impure, foul smelling, and defiled. How can the round Earth be compared to a date? Its gradual turning is so slight, like seeds being ground into dust grains, so it is impossible to say that it can be. The body is given to faults and anxiety. This is why it must be abandoned, like casting aside tears and criticism.

Under these circumstances the laywomen, constantly cultivated their minds with the Dharmas of emptiness, marklessness, and wishlessness. They deeply delighted in asking to receive the Mahāyāna Sūtras. And having heard them, they could explain them to others. They protected and upheld their personal vows, even while their female bodies were slandered. They could deeply cause the nature of distress and anxiety to not be strong. They always cultivated their minds, gathered thus the correct contemplation, and destroyed the endlessly turning wheel of birth and death (saṣsāra). Once they had quenched their thirst for the Mahāyāna and were completely satisfied, they could, again, drink up what remained. They deeply delighted in the Mahāyāna and defended it. And although they manifested female bodies, they were really bodhisattvas. They were skillfully able to conform themselves to all worldly beings, liberating those not yet liberated and understanding what has not yet been understood. They assisted the three jewels, being certain that they did not perish. And in future lives they would turn the Dharma wheel, adorning themselves with the great armor. They firmly kept the precepts. Consummating thus such virtues, there arose in them the great thought of compassion when they regarded sentient beings, seeing them with equanimity and without duality, as they would an only child.

[607a] In the early morning at sunrise, they said to one another, "Today we ought to go to that pair of sāla trees." The laywomen gathered together supplies twice as great as those before. They took these offerings, went to the Buddha, prostrated themselves at his feet, and circled him one hundred thousand times. They said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, we now have provided these offerings of supplies for the Buddha and the saṣgha. Our only wish is for the Tathāgata to mercifully accept our very last offerings." The Tathāgata remained silent and did not accept their offerings. The laywomen's wish having no effect, their minds were sorrowful and anguished as they withdrew to sit at one side.

And at that time, carts carrying the men, women, wives, children, and attendants from the city of Vaiśālī were present whose number was equal to that of the sands of four Ganges rivers. And with them also was the King of Jambudvīpa and his attendants, who came seeking the Dharma. They were skilled in cultivating of the practice of the precepts and had perfected was their majestic deportment. Defeating the heretics who harm the true Dharma, they always said to one another, "We shall use gold, silver, and grain to bring about the sweet dew of the inexhaustible and true Dharma so that the germ at its very core will abide for a long time in the world. This wish leads us to always cultivate our studies. If there is someone who slanders the Buddha's true Dharma, we shall cut out their tongue."

And, again, they made the vow, "If there is someone who leaves the household life and then breaks the precepts, I shall stop him and send him back to the lay life to work as a scribe. If they can take deep delight in protecting and keeping the true Dharma, I shall respect and honor them as I would my own father and mother. If there is a saṣgha that can cultivate the true Dharma, I shall follow them gladly and give them vitality and strength."

They always wished to gladly listen to the Mahāyāna Sūtras and having heard them, they could explain them to others. They had completely consummated such virtues.

Their names were the Licchavi Pure and Undefined Seed, the Licchavi Pure Restraint, and the Licchavi Eternal Waters of Undefined and Pure Virtue. They said to one another, "Sage, now let us make haste to the Buddha with offerings of a variety of excellent supplies." Each of these

Licchavis were adorned with eighty-four thousand great elephants, eighty-four thousand great four-horse jewel-inlaid carts, and eighty-four thousand moonlight pearls. They took with them a variety of eighty-four thousand kinds of bundles of heavenly wood, sandalwood, aguru, and airavaōa firewood. Each of the elephants bore precious pennants, flags, and canopies. The smaller canopies that were wrapped around them loosely filled the area of a yojana. The very shortest of the flags measured thirty-two yojanas long. The shortest of the pennants were one hundred yojanas tall. Carrying such offerings, they went to the Buddha, prostrated themselves at his feet, and circled him one hundred thousand times. They said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, we now have provided these offerings of supplies for the Buddha and the saṢgha. Our only wish is for the Tathāgata to mercifully accept our offerings." The Tathāgata remained silent and did not accept their offerings. The Licchavis' wish having no effect, their minds were sorrowful and grieved. By the Buddha's spiritual power, they were moved to a stand [607b] of seven tāla trees, and there they silently waited.

And at that time, there was a group of great ministers and elders present whose number was equal to that of the sands of five Ganges rivers. They respected the Mahāyāna. If there were heretics slandered the true Dharma, these men had the ability to defeat them, just as hail and rain breaks and bends the grasses and trees. The names of the foremost leaders were the Elder Sunlight, the Elder Defender of the World, and the Elder Defender of the Dharma. They gathered together supplies five times as great as those before and together took their offerings to that pair of sāla trees. They prostrated themselves at the Buddha's feet and circled him one hundred thousand times. Then they said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, we now have provided these offerings of supplies for the Buddha and the saṢgha. Our only wish is for the Tathāgata to mercifully accept our offerings." The Tathāgata remained silent and did not accept them. The elders' wish having no effect, their minds were sorrowful and anguished. By the Buddha's spiritual power, they were moved to a stand of seven tāla trees and there they silently waited.

And at that time, the King of Vaiśālī, his wife, and his palace retinue were present. From within Jambudvīpa came the kings who had removed the King Ajātaśatru from power. They came together with the common people from the villages, towns, and cities of their kingdoms. Among them was one king named Moon Without Defilement. Each wearing four weapons, they wished to go to the Buddha. Each of these kings had a retinue of one hundred and eighty trillion common people. Their carts were war chariots pulled by elephants and horses. The elephants had six tusks and the horses were as swift as the wind. The carts were laden with supplies six times as great as those before. The very smallest of the precious canopies had a circumference that easily filled an area of eight yojanas. The very shortest of the flags was sixteen yojanas long. And the lowest of the precious pennants was thirty-six yojanas tall. These kings peacefully dwelt in the true Dharma and detested scornfully the mistaken Dharmas. They respected the Mahāyāna and deeply delighted in the Mahāyāna. They felt compassion for sentient beings, as they would an only child. They carried beverages and food, the aroma of which perfumed the air throughout an area of four yojanas.

In the early morning at sunrise, they too took up a variety of superior and wondrous sweet delicacies and went to the Tathāgata between the pair of sāla trees. They said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, we now have provided these offerings of supplies for the Buddha and the saṢgha. Our only wish is for the Tathāgata to mercifully accept our very last offerings." The Tathāgata remained silent when he saw this and did not accept their offerings. The kings' wish having no effect, their minds were sorrowful and anguished as they withdrew to sit at one side.

And at that time, the wives of the kings were present, whose number was equal to that of the sands of seven Ganges rivers. They were only those who had removed the wife of King Ajātaśatru from power. In order to liberate sentient beings, they manifested themselves with female bodies. They constantly contemplated their bodily conduct. [607c] They perfumed and cultivated their minds with the Dharmas of emptiness, marklessness, and wishlessness. Among the kings' wives were the wife Wonder of the Three Realms and the wife Commiserate Virtue. They peacefully dwelt in the true Dharma, cultivated their practice of the precepts, and perfected their majestic deportment. They felt compassion for sentient beings, as they would an only child.

They said to one another, "We should now make haste to the World Honored One." The kings' wives gathered offerings seven times as great as those before. They took up aromatic flowers, precious pennants, embroidered silk, flags, canopies, and superior and wondrous beverages and food. The smallest of the precious canopies easily filled an area of sixteen yojanas. The very shortest of the flags was thirty-six yojanas in long. The lowest of the precious pennants was sixty-eight yojanas tall. The aroma of the beverages and foods perfumed the air throughout an area of eight yojanas. Carrying these offerings of supplies, they went to the Tathāgata, prostrated themselves at his feet, and then circled him one hundred thousand times. They said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, we have provided these offerings of supplies for the Buddha and the saṅgha. Our only wish is for the Tathāgata to mercifully accept our very last offerings." The Tathāgata remained silent when he saw this and did not accept their offerings. Then, the wives' wish having no effect, their minds were sorrowful and anguished. They pulled hair out of their heads, beat their chests, and let out a great cry, like compassionate mothers who had recently attended the funeral of a beloved child. They withdrew to sit quietly to one side.

And at that time, there was a group of goddesses present whose number was equal to that of the sands of eight Ganges rivers. The foremost leader among them was the Goddess Extensive Eye. She made the statement, "O, sisters! Look closely, look closely! These various assemblies have gathered together a variety of superior and wondrous offerings of supplies with the wish to offer them to the Tathāgata and the bhikṣu saṅgha. We should also gather together such marvelous offerings of supplies to give to the Tathāgata. Once the Tathāgata has accepted them, he will then enter Nirvāṇa. Sisters, the appearance of the Buddhas, the Tathāgatas, in the world is most rare. To make the very last offerings they accept is twice as rare as that. If the Buddha enters Nirvāṇa, the world will be empty."

The goddesses delighted in the Mahāyāna and wished to listen to the Mahāyāna. Having heard it, they could also explain it to others. When their thirst was quenched for the Mahāyāna and they were completely satisfied, they could, again, drink up what remained. They were defenders of the Mahāyāna. If there was someone from another tradition who was envious of the Mahāyāna, the goddesses were strong enough to knock down their arguments, like a storm knocking down grass. They protected and kept the practice of the precepts and perfected their majestic deportment. They were skillfully able to conform themselves to all worldly beings, liberating those not yet liberated and saving those not yet saved. And in future lives they would turn the Dharma wheel, assist the three jewels, being certain that they did not perish, cultivate the study of the Mahāyāna, and adorn themselves with the great armor. Having consummated such measureless virtues, they felt compassion for sentient beings, as they would [608a] an only child.

In the early morning at sunrise, they each took up a variety of heavenly wood and fragrances, twice that possessed by the human assemblies. The scent of their wood that perfumed the air suppressed the variety of foul odors that were among the humans. They had white carts with white canopies drawn by teams of white horses. Atop each cart was spread a white sheet. From all four sides of the sheets dangled gold, silver, a variety of fragrant flowers, precious pennants, flags, and canopies. Atop them were piled wondrously sweet delicacies and there was a variety of delightful dancers. The goddesses prepared lion thrones, and the four feet of those thrones were made of pure blue agate. On the backside of these thrones the seven treasures were sown into the back and floor. On the front side of each throne was also a golden desk. Again, there were tree lamps made of the seven treasures and a variety of pearls were used to light lamps. Marvelous were the heavenly flowers scattered on the ground everywhere. Once the goddesses had gathered these gifts, their minds became sorrowful, their tears flowed freely, and there arose in them a great anguish. Also, in order to bless sentient beings with peaceful happiness, they had consummated the Mahāyāna's supreme practice of emptiness, and set forth the expedients of the Tathāgata's esoteric teachings. And to prevent the disappearance of the various spoken Dharmas, they went to the Buddha, prostrated themselves at his feet, and circled him one hundred thousand times. Then they said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, our only wish is for the Tathāgata to mercifully accept our very last offerings." The Tathāgata remained silent when he saw this and did not accept their offerings. The goddesses' wish having no effect, their minds were grieved and anguished. They withdrew to one side quietly and seated themselves.

And at that time, there were the nāga kings who resided in the four directions present whose number was equal to that of the sands of nine Ganges rivers. The foremost leaders were the nāga King Peaceful Cultivation of Fortune, the nāga King Nanda, and the nāga King Bhananda.

In the early morning at sunrise, these nāga kings gathered offerings of supplies twice as great as that of the men and gods. They brought them to the Buddha, prostrated themselves at his feet, and circled him one hundred thousand times. Then they said to the Buddha, "Our only wish is for the Tathāgata to mercifully accept our very last offerings." The Tathāgata remained silent when he saw this and did not accept their offerings. The nāga kings' wish having no effect, their minds were grieved and anguished as they withdrew to sit to one side.

And at that time, there were preta kings present whose number was equal to that of the sands of ten Ganges rivers. The foremost leader was the king Vaiśravana. They said to one another, "The Sages are now making haste to the Buddha!" They gathered offerings of supplies twice that of the nāgas. They brought them to the Buddha, prostrated themselves at his feet, and circled him one hundred thousand times. Then they said to the Buddha, "Our only wish is for the Tathāgata to mercifully accept our very last offerings." The Tathāgata remained silent when he saw this and did not accept their offerings. The preta kings' wish having no effect, their minds were grieved and anguished as they withdrew to sit to one side.

At that time, there again were gold-winged bird kings (garuḥas) present whose number was equal to that of the sands of twenty Ganges rivers. The foremost among them was [608b] bird king Subjugator of Hatred. Again, there were gandharva kings present whose number was equal to that of the sands of thirty Ganges rivers. The foremost among them was King Nālandā. Again, there were kinnara kings present whose number was equal to that of the sands of forty Ganges rivers. The foremost among them was King Good Sight. Again, there were mahoraga kings present whose number was equal to that of fifty Ganges rivers. The foremost among them was King Great Good Sight. Again, there were asura kings present whose number was equal to that of the sands of sixty Ganges rivers. The foremost among them was King Śavaliśa. Again, there were dānavat kings present whose number was equal to that of the sands of seventy Ganges rivers. The foremost among them was King Undeiled River Waters and King Bhadradata. Again, there were rākūasa kings present whose number was equal to that of the sands of eighty Ganges rivers. The foremost among them was King Terrible. They abandoned their evil thoughts and moreover desisted from eating people. From their hate there arose compassionate thoughts. Their ugly and mean countenances were made straight and correct by the Buddha's power. Again, there were tree and wood spirit kings present whose number was equal to that of the sands of ninety Ganges rivers. The foremost among them was King Pleasant Perfume. Again, there were dhāraṇī keeper kings present whose number was equal to that of the sands of one thousand Ganges rivers. The foremost among them was King Great Dhāraṇī Keeper. Again, there were form-craving ghosts present whose number was equal to that of the sands of ten million Ganges rivers. The foremost among them was King Good Sight. Again, there were beautiful deva maidens present whose number was equal to that of the sands of a billion Ganges rivers. The foremost among them was Lamba, Ubha, Tilochan, and Viśaka. Again, there were spirit kings present whose number was equal to that of the sands of ten billion Ganges rivers. The foremost among them was the King White Fluid. Again there were gods, the four god-kings, and other god-kings present whose number was equal to that of the sands of one hundred billion Ganges rivers.

Again, there were spirits from the four winds present whose number was equal to that of the sands of one hundred billion Ganges rivers. When they wailed above the trees, the flowers did not then scatter among the two sāla trees.

Again, there were spirits who were the lords of the rain clouds present whose number was equal to that of the sands of one hundred billion Ganges rivers. They thought, "When the Tathāgata enters Nirvāṇa and his body is cremated, I will pour the rains down to put out the fire. And among the congregation, the fever of anguish then will be cooled."

Again, there were fragrant elephant kings present whose number was equal to that of the sands of two hundred billion Ganges rivers. The foremost among them were King Rāhu, King Golden, King Sweet Flavor, King Purple Eye, and King Desire's Fragrance. They respected the Mahāyāna and delighted in the Mahāyāna. Knowing that it was not long before the Buddha would

enter parinirvāḥa, each of them picked and brought a measureless and boundless number of wondrous lotus flowers, went to the Buddha, bowed their heads at his feet, and then withdrew to sit at one side.

Again, there were lions, kings of beasts, present whose number was equal to that of the sands of two hundred billion Ganges rivers. The foremost among them was King Lion's Roar. They gave fearlessness to all the sentient beings, brought flowers and fruit to the Buddha, bowed their heads at the Buddha's feet, and withdrew to sit to one side.

Again, there were flying bird kings present whose number was equal to that of the sands of two hundred billion Ganges rivers. They included ducks, geese, swans, peacocks, sparrows, [608c] gandharva birds, karaḥā birds, ..., kokila birds, ..., kalavīka birds, and partridges. These birds brought flowers and fruits to the Buddha, bowed their heads at his feet, and then withdrew to sit a one side.

Again, there were water buffalo, cattle, and sheep present whose number was equal to that of the sands of twenty Ganges rivers. They went to the Buddha and gave a wondrously scented milk and that milk flowed all the way to the city of Kuśinagara. The sewers and pits there took on the color, fragrance, and flavor of it, all of them being perfected. Once these things were done, the animals withdrew to sit to one side.

Again, there were the spirits and sages from the four heavens present whose number was equal to that of the sands of twenty Ganges rivers. The foremost among them was the Sage named Tolerance. They brought fragrant flowers and sweet fruits to the Buddha, bowed their heads at his feet, and circled him three times. They said to the Buddha, "Our only wish is for the World Honored One to accept our very last offerings." The Tathagata remained silent when he saw this and did not accept them. When the sage's wishes went without effect, their minds were anguished as they withdrew to sit at one side.

There was also present all the bees in Jambudvīpa. The foremost among them was King Wondrous Voice. They brought a variety of flowers to the Buddha, bowed to his feet, circled him once, and then withdrew to one side.

At that time, the monks and nuns in Jambudvīpa all gathered together. The only ones missing were the two congregations of Venerable Mahākāśyapa and Venerable Ānanda. Again, there were the mountains of Jambudvīpa in worlds whose number was equal to that of the sands of a measureless asaīkha of Ganges rivers, the foremost of which was Mount Sumeru. Together the mountains were adorned with densely growing trees and vegetation. The branches and leaves were lush and full, covering and obscuring the light of the sun. They were decorated with a variety of wondrous flowers everywhere. From nāga-springs flowed waters that were pure, fragrant, and clean. The gods, nāgas, spirits, gandharvas, asuras, garuḥas, kinnaras, mahoragas, and spirit sages intoned magical incantations, sang, and played musical instruments. Thus were the Mount Sumerus filled. The mountain spirits also went to the Buddha, bowed their heads to his feet, and withdrew to one side.

Again there were the spirits of the four oceans and the rivers present whose number was equal to that of the sands of an asaīkha of Ganges rivers. They possessed great majestic virtue and spiritual abilities. They provided twice the supplies of those before them, their spirit bodies glowing and they played instruments while carrying lamp lights. All this obscured the sun and the moon, causing them not to appear. They scattered divining flowers in lines across the rivers. They went to the Buddha, bowed their heads at his feet, and then withdrew to sit at one side.

At that time, the trees of the sāla tree forest near the city of Kuśinagara turned white like the white stork. And in the sky there spontaneously appeared a reception hall and tower made of the seven treasures. It was engraved, [609a] carved, and inlaid ornamentally with brilliance. It was surrounded by a railing that was made of a mixture of myriad jewels. Beneath the hall were many springs that flowed into bathing pools. Atop the pools there were wondrous lotus flowers that covered their surface. Like the Uttara-kuru continent to the North and also like the delightful gardens of the Trayastriṃśāś heaven, there was at that time a variety of adornments inbetween the sāla trees which were lovely and delightful in the same way. Everyone regarded this as an indication of the Tathāgata's Nirvāṇa. All felt sympathy, anxiety, grief, and unhappiness.

And at that time, there was Śakro Devānām Indraḥ and the four god kings present. They said to one another, "You should contemplate the great collections of offerings made by the gods, humans, and asuras and their wish to make the very last offerings to the Tathāgata. We, too, should make such offerings. If we were to make the very last offerings, the complete fulfillment of the perfection of giving (dāna-pāramitā) would not be difficult."

At that time, the four god kings gathered together offerings twice as great as those before. They brought mandārava flowers, great mandārava flowers, maṃjūaka flowers, great maṃjūaka flowers, sandānikā flowers, great sandānikā flowers, lovely flowers, great lovely flowers, flowers of universal virtue, great flowers of universal virtue, timely flowers, great timely flowers, city perfuming flowers, great city perfuming flowers, delightful flowers, great delightful flowers, flowers that stir up desire, great flowers that stir up desire, flowers of intoxicating fragrance, great flowers of intoxicating fragrance, flowers of pervasive fragrance, great flowers of pervasive fragrance, heavenly golden-pedaled flowers, nāga flowers, pārijāta tree flowers, and kovidāra tree flowers. And they brought a variety of superior and wondrous sweet delicacies. They went to the Buddha and prostrated themselves at his feet. These gods glowed with a brilliance that outshone the sun and moon. With these supplies, they wished to make offerings to the Buddha. The Tathāgata remained silent when he saw this and did not accept their offerings. At that time, the gods' wish having no effect, they were grieved and anguished as they withdrew to wait at one side.

And at that time, there was Śakro Devānām Indraḥ and the thirty-three gods of the Trayastrimśāḥ heaven. They gathered together offerings of supplies twice as great as those before. And they brought flowers as before, which perfumed the air in a marvelous and lovely way. They also brought excellent temples and small shrines with them. They went to the Buddha, prostrated themselves at his feet, and said to him, "World Honored One, we deeply delight in, cherish, and defend the Mahāyāna. Our only wish is for the Tathāgata to mercifully accept our offerings." The Tathāgata remained silent when he saw this and did not accept their offerings. And so, the Indra gods' wish having no effect, their minds were grieved and anguished as they withdrew to sit at one side.

Up to the sixth heaven, the gods gathered together offerings, each greater than the last. They gathered precious pennants, flags, and canopies. The smallest of the [609b] canopies covered the four heavens. The shortest of the flags enwrapped the four oceans. The lowest of the pennants reached up to the Paranirmitavaśavartin heaven. And the pennants fluttering in the wind produced a wondrous sound. The gods also brought the sweetest delicacies. They went to the Buddha and prostrated themselves at his feet. They said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, our only wish is for the Tathāgata to mercifully accept our offerings." The Tathāgata remained silent when he saw this and did not accept their offerings. The gods' wish having no effect, their minds were grieved and anguished as they withdrew to sit at one side.

Above them, the remaining brahma congregations all came and gathered together.

And at that time, there was Lord Brahma and the remaining congregations of brahma gods. Their bodies emitted a brilliance that pervaded everything under the four heavens, so much so that the light of the humans, gods, sun, and moon in the desire realm were all outshone. These brahma gods brought precious pennants, silk embroideries, flags, and canopies. The very shortest of the flags were hung from Brahma's palace and extended down to the sāla trees below. They went to the Buddha and prostrated themselves at his feet. They said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, our only wish is for the Tathāgata to mercifully accept our offerings." The Tathāgata remained silent when he saw this and did not accept the offerings. At that time, the brahmas' wish having no effect, their minds were grieved and anguished as they withdrew to sit at one side.

And at that time, there was the asura King Vimalacitra, who was accompanied by a great retinue of asuras of an infinite number. Their bodies emitted lights that surpassed that of the brahma gods. They brought precious pennants, silk embroideries, flags, and canopies. The smallest of their canopies could cover a chiliocosm. With the sweetest delicacies, they went to the Buddha and prostrated themselves at his feet. They said to the Buddha, "Our only wish is for the Tathāgata to mercifully accept our very last offerings." The Tathāgata remained silent when he saw this and did not accept their offerings. The asuras' wish having no effect, their minds were grieved and anguished as they withdrew to sit at one side.

And at that time, there was the m̀ara king of the desire realm, Pāpīyān. He was accompanied by a congregation of measureless and boundless asaī khyas of gods and maidens. He opened the gates to Hell and poured in pure ice water. For this reason, he said, "Now, there is nothing that you can do but concentrate your thoughts to the Tathāgata, the Worthy, the Completely Enlightened One. Let us put together the very last offerings to bring him happiness. This will lead you ancient demons to find peace." Then the m̀ara Pāpīyān went into the Hell where all were put to death with blades coated with an infinite variety of excruciating poisons. He poured into that Hell a rain that extinguished the raging flames there. And with the Buddha's spiritual power, he again engendered the 'citta, leading those of his retinue to put down their blades, bows, crossbows, armor, halberds, spears, lances, long hooks, metal mallets, battle axes, hatchets, quarreling, arguing, entrapping, and hunting.

They gathered together offerings twice as great as that gathered by all of the gods and humans. The smallest of their canopies could cover a medium chiliocosm. They went to the Buddha and prostrated themselves at his feet. They said to the Buddha, "We now delight in the Mahāyāna and defend the Mahāyāna. World Honored One, suppose there are good sons [609c] and good daughters who in order to give offerings, because they are fearful, reside in Hell, are materially blessed, or to follow others, accept the Mahāyāna, either truly or falsely. We then at that time will eliminate that person's fears when they speak this dhāraōā:

"Taki tatarataki rokarei makarokarei ara shara tara shaka.

"This dhāraōā can keep those of mistaken thoughts, those who are afraid, and the Dharma preachers from cutting off the true Dharma. This is because when one enunciates this dhāraōā, it subjugates the heretical paths, protects one's own body, protects the true Dharma, and protects the Mahāyāna. If there is one who can maintain this dhāraōā, there are no evil apparitions that can frighten him. If he should go into desolate lands, empty wetlands, or onto mountain peaks, he will not be frightened. And there are no waters, fires, lions, tigers, wolves, bandits, rebels, or kings who will be difficulties.

"World Honored One, if one is able to maintain this dhāraōā, then he will be able to eliminate these sorts of fears. World Honored One, we shall be the protection of those who maintain this dhāraōā, like the six-piece shell of the tortoise. World Honored One, this is not vain talk, what we now say. We shall sincerely bless with our strength those who maintain this dhāraōā. Our only wish is for the Tathāgata to mercifully accept our very last offerings."

At that time, the Buddha addressed the m̀ara Pāpīyān, "I will not accept your offerings of drink and food, but I have accepted your enunciation of this dhāraōā for the sake of the peace and happiness of all the sentient beings in the fourfold assemblies here." The Buddha having said this fell silent and did not accept their offerings. After three such attempts, he still did not accept them. And so, the m̀ara Pāpīyān's wish having no effect, his mind was grieved and anguished as he withdrew to sit at one side.

And at that time, there was Maheśvara, the king of the Paranirmitavaśavartin heaven, accompanied by his retinue of a measureless and limitless number of gods. They gathered together offerings of supplies such that buried the offerings gathered by all of the brahmas, indras, the four heavenly protectors, humans, and gods of the eight-fold assemblies, as well as the non-humans. The offerings gathered by the brahmas and indras were like a heap of charcoal where white agate and seashells once shined. The smallest of their precious canopies could cover an entire trichiliocosm. They took such offerings of supplies and went to Buddha, prostrated themselves at his feet, and circled him a countless number of times. They said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, we are here to hand over our very last offerings of supplies, which are like that of a mosquito or a gnat. Our gift of offerings is like a person who throws a handful of water into the ocean, adds a single small lamp to one hundred thousand suns, adds a single flower to all the myriad flowers that grow and bloom in the Spring and Summer months, or adds a single atom to Mount Sumeru. How can such a person add to the [610a] ocean, the sunlight, myriad flowers, or Mount Sumeru? World Honored One, our handing over these final offerings of supplies is also like this. If the trichiliocosm were filled with fragrant flowers, dancers, flags, and canopies, it could not

be said that it is sufficient enough an offering to honor the Tathāgata. And why? The Tathāgata acts on behalf of the sentient beings who are constantly undergoing afflictions in the unpleasant destinies of the hells, hungry ghosts, and animals. This is why, World Honored One, that you should look upon us mercifully and accept our offerings."

At that time, there was a Buddha land to the East, beyond worlds whose number was equal to that of the measureless and countless sand grains of an *asaī khya* of Ganges rivers. That Buddha land was called the Beautiful Voice with the Intent of Happiness and its Buddha was called Space, a Tathāgata, a Worthy, a Completely Enlightened One, who is perfect in wisdom and conduct, well gone, a knower of the world, unsurpassed, a tamer of men, a teacher of men and gods, and a World Honored One.

At that time, that Buddha addressed the best of his great disciples, saying, "Good son, you should now go to the Sahā world to the West. In that land there is a Buddha called Śākyamuni, a Tathāgata, a Worthy, a Completely Enlightened One, who is perfect in wisdom and conduct, well gone, a knower of the world, unsurpassed, a tamer of men, a teacher of men and gods, and a World Honored One. It is not long now that that Buddha shall enter *parinirvāḍa*. Good son, you can take the fragrant food of this world with you. That food is a fragrant and beautiful meal of contentment. You may take and present it to that Buddha, that World Honored One. Once that World Honored One has eaten it, he will enter *parinirvāḍa*. Good son, you can pay your respects to him and ask to have your doubts put to rest."

At that time, the Bodhisattva-mahāsattva Limitless Body accepted that Buddha's instruction and rose from his seat. He prostrated himself at the Buddha's feet, circled him clockwise three times, and left his land and came to this Sahā world with an assembly of infinite *asaī khyas* of bodhisattvas.

In response, the ground throughout this trichilocosm shook in six ways. The ground beneath the great assemblies of the brahmas, indras, four god kings, *māra* king Pāpīyān, and Maheśvara also shook. The hair on their bodies stood on end and their throats and tongues became parched. They were frightened and outraged. They wished to scatter to the four directions. They saw that their bodies no longer glowed and that their majestic virtue was completely eliminated, without exception.

At that moment, the Dharma prince Mañjuśrī got up from his seat and called out to the great assemblies, saying, "Good sons! Do not be frightened! Why should you not be frightened? To the East, beyond worlds whose number is equal to that of the measureless and countless sands of an *asaī khya* of Ganges rivers, there is a Buddha land that is called the Beautiful Voice with the Intent of Happiness. Its Buddha is called Space, a Tathāgata, a Worthy, a Completely Enlightened One. He has fulfilled all ten of the epithets of a Buddha. And in that land there is a bodhisattva whose name is Limitless Body [610b] who is accompanied by a measureless number of bodhisattvas who wish to come and make offerings to the Tathāgata. It is the power of the majestic virtue of those bodhisattvas that has caused the glow of your bodies to completely cease. This is why you should be elated and not alarmed or frightened."

At that time, those in the great assembly all saw the other Buddha's great congregation, as though they were looking into a bright mirror and seeing themselves.

Then Mañjuśrī again addressed the great assembly, "You are now seeing that other Buddha's great assembly, which is like seeing this Buddha. With the Buddha's spiritual power, you again shall see the measureless Buddhas in the other nine directions."

At that time, those in the great assembly said to one another, "The distress, the distress! The world is empty! It will not be long now that the Tathāgata will enter *parinirvāḍa*."

Then the great assembly all saw Bodhisattva Limitless Body and his retinue. From each hair on the bodhisattva's body was produced a great lotus flower. Each one of these lotus flowers had seventy-eight thousand cities on them that sprawled out like the city of Vaiśālī. The walls and moats of the cities were embedded and filled with a variety of mixtures of the seven treasures. There were jeweled *tāla* trees and seven kinds of path railings. The common people were prosperous, peaceful, wealthy, and happy. The Jambu river, whose sands were gold, had tributaries, each of which had forests of seven-treasured trees on their banks. These trees

flowered and bore fruit abundantly. A fine wind whistled and moved through the trees, producing a marvelous sound. The sound was harmonious and graceful like heavenly music.

Inside the cities, the people heard this music and, when they did, partook of a most wondrously resolute happiness. There were depressions in the land filled with wondrous waters that were pure and clean smelling, like true agate. In these waters there were boats made of the seven treasures that carried people who played at sports and bathed on the decks. They enjoyed each other's company and theirs was a firm and unchanging happiness without surpass. And there was an infinite number of variously colored lotus flowers. There were blue lotuses, white lotuses, red lotuses, and silver lotuses. These flowers had diameters measuring like cartwheels.

And on the outside of the cities' moats there were numerous forested parks. In each of these parks there was five springs and lakes. And in these lakes there again were lotuses. There were blue lotuses, white lotuses, red lotuses, and silver lotuses. These lotus flowers had a diameter that were also like cartwheels. They perfumed the air with luxuriant fragrances that were most lovely. The waters of the lakes were pure, soft, pliable, and supreme. There were drakes, geese, ducks, and other waterfowl that frolicked in the lakes.

Those parks contained palaces and households. Each of these palaces and households had a diameter and height filling four yojanas. They possessed property walls made completely of four precious materials. Those materials were gold, silver, agate, and rock crystal. Windows of real gold were set in the encircling wall. The floors were made of ruby and coated with gold dust. Inside of the palaces and households were bathing pools made of the seven treasures. There were eighteen golden staircases and ladders around the border of each of these bathing pools. And on the shores of the golden Jambu rivers were [610c] plantain trees. The joy found in these parks were comparable to that of the Trayastrimśāḥ heaven.

Each of these cities had eighty-four thousand human kings. Each of these kings had a measureless number of wives and concubines. They enjoyed one another's company, happily frolicking. The remaining people of the cities were also so. In each home they happily frolicked. In these places sentient beings did not hear the names of the heretics. Purely, they heard the voice of the unsurpassed Mahāyāna.

In each of those flowers, there was a lion's throne. The four feet of those thrones were all made of a deep blue agate. A soft and pliable cloth covered the tops of the thrones. That cloth was marvelous and made beyond the three realms. Atop each of those thrones a king sat who transformed sentient beings with the Dharma teachings of the Mahāyāna. On some on the thrones there were sentient beings who copied, kept, read, recited, as they were taught, and cultivated the Mahāyāna Sūtras, thus propagating them.

At that time, Bodhisattva Limitless Body stood still and this caused the infinite sentient beings on his body to abandon their worldly pleasures. They all said, "The distress, the distress! The world is empty! It will not be long now before the Tathāgata shall enter parinirvāḥa."

At that time, the Bodhisattva Limitless Body, encircled by the assembly of measureless bodhisattvas, demonstrated in this way his spiritual power. He brought the variety of measureless offerings of supplies and the most wondrous, fragrant, and beautiful food and drink. Those who happened to smell the food's aroma had their afflictions and defilements completely nullified. Because of that bodhisattva's spiritual powers, all in the great assembly saw the transformation of Bodhisattva Limitless Body's body into a great limitless expanse of space. Only those governed by the other Buddhas were unable to see the bodhisattva's body in its ultimate dimensions.

At that time, Bodhisattva Limitless Body and his retinue gathered together offerings twice as great as those before and went to the Buddha. They prostrated themselves at his feet and with their palms together reverently said to him, "World Honored One, our only wish is for you to mercifully accept our food." The Tathāgata remained silent when he saw this and did not accept their offerings. After three such attempts, he still did not accept them. At that time, Bodhisattva Limitless Body and his retinue withdrew to sit at one side.

And in the Buddha worlds to the South, West, and North, there were also an infinite number of bodhisattvas with limitless bodies who gathered offerings twice as great as those before, went to the Buddha, and eventually withdrew to sit at one side. They were also so.

At that time, the grounds around the pair of sàla trees were most auspicious. A great assembly filled an area with a diameter of thirty-two yojanas, leaving no space therein unoccupied. At that time, in all four directions, there sat the Bodhisattva Limitless Body and his retinue, some of them so small as to fit on the head of a drill or the point of a needle, like atoms. From the Buddha worlds of the ten directions that numbered like atoms, great bodhisattvas came and gathered together. [611a] And all of the great assemblies from Jambudvīpa also came and gathered. It was only the two assemblies of Venerable Mahākāśyapa and Venerable Ānanda that were missing. King Ajātaśatru and his retinue, venomous snakes that were capable of killing people, crickets, vipers, lizards, and the other beings of sixteen ways of evil actions all gathered together. Dānavat, spirits, and asuras all abandoned their evil thoughts and there arose in them the compassionate mind, like that of a father, mother, elder sister, or a younger sister. Throughout the trichiliocosm, there arose in sentient beings a compassion for one another. They were also so. The only exceptions were the icchantikas.

At that time, because of the Buddha's spiritual power, the grounds throughout the trichiliocosm became soft and pliant so that there were no more hilly lands, sands, pebbles, rocks, thorns, brambles, or poisonous plants. Myriad treasures adorned the lands just as in the Buddha Infinite Life Span's (Amitāyus) world of Utmost Bliss (Sukhāvatī) to the West. And then all those in this great assembly saw into the Buddha worlds of the ten directions, which numbered like atoms, and it was as though looking into a bright mirror and seeing themselves. They were seeing scenes in those Buddha lands that were also so.

At that time, the Tathāgata emitted from his facial orifices a light of five colors and that light lit brilliantly the entire assembly. It outshone the bodily glow of those in the great assembly. It then returned again and entered his mouth. At that moment, the gods and their assemblies, the asuras, et al. who saw the Buddha's brilliant light enter his mouth were all greatly alarmed and the hair on their bodies stood on end. And then they said, "This light that has left the Tathāgata and returned again to him is not without causes and conditions. It must be a portent to all in the ten directions that his parinirvāḥa is at hand. How he suffers! How he suffers! And what about the World Honored One on this morning leaving aside the four immeasurable minds and refusing to accept the offerings brought to him by men and gods? The sunlight of noble wisdom shall be extinguished from now to eternity. The unsurpassed ship of the Dharma shall sink and be destroyed. Alas, the affliction! This world's great suffering!" They lifted their hands to their heads, beat their chests, and gave a great cry. Their behavior was outrageous, for they were unable to maintain their composure. From the pores of their bodies blood flowed and bathed the Earth.

Here ends fascicle one of the Great Parinirvāḥa Sātra